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ART. XVI.—*Analysis of the Ganēśa Purāṇa, with special reference to the History of Buddhism. By the Rev. Dr. STEVENSON.*

[Read January 4, 1845.]

THINKING that the Gaṇeśa Purāṇa might throw some light on the origin of the Śaiva worship, I lately took it up to examine it in that relation. I had not proceeded far in this investigation before I was fortunate enough to meet with two legends, which I conceive have a distinct reference to the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. One of these is contained in the first, and the other in the second khaṇḍa or division of the Purāṇa; and to their consideration I shall devote this paper, after a few brief general remarks on the work itself.

The former called the Upāsana Khaṇḍa of the Purāṇa, could scarcely have been written before the seventeenth century of our era, as Morēśvar (*Sans.* Mayāreśvara) is mentioned as a great Tirtha of Gaṇeśa; but till Morabhatta, who flourished in the former part of that century, gave it celebrity, and originated the Chinchora (Chinchvad) incarnate Gaṇapatis, it was a place altogether unknown to fame.

The Purāṇa commences with the misfortune of Somakānta, king of Surāt (*Sans.* Saurāśṭra), who, on account of the affliction of leprosy, left his home and kingdom to wander in the wilderness. While roaming about from place to place, he came in contact with the sage Bhṛigu, one of his progenitors, who related to him what Brahmā had in ancient times related to Vyāsa in praise of Gaṇeśa. The sum of the whole is, that Gautama, Saubhari, Kaundinya, Viśvámitra, and all the Rishis, recommend to sundry applicants for ghostly advice the worship of Gaṇeśa, and the repetition of the two *mantras*, the one, *Sri Gaṇeśāya namaḥ*, and the other the mystic *Om*. Indra, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Paraśurāma, Skanda, &c., are all represented as having failed in their projects till they applied to Gaṇeśa, through whose aid alone they were enabled to perform their exploits. Bhṛigu, therefore, in conclusion, sends away his pupil Somakānta to get rid of his disease, the consequence of sins committed in a former state, by worshipping Gaṇapati on the 4th of Bhādrapad, according to the institute in which he had instructed him.

The second Khaṇḍa of the Purāṇa refers to the first, and therefore must have been written after it. Śūta is there introduced as relating to the assembled sages what Bhṛigu had rehearsed to Somakānta, and Brahmā originally narrated at the request of Vyāsa. To extol

Gañeśa above all other objects of religious adoration is equally the purport of this second division. In the Purāṇa, two distinct modes of worshipping Gañeśa are pointed out. At one time he is identified with the supreme spirit, Paramātmā, the Brahma of the Vedantists, and is to be worshipped by mystical contemplation alone. The other mode by which religious homage may be paid to him is, the forming the image of the god, crowning it with flowers, presenting to it offerings, and celebrating the annual festival of Gaṇapati.

The particular legend in the first division of the Purāṇa to which reference has been made, and which is interwoven with the principal theme after the manner of the episodic stories in the Panchopākhyāna and the Arabian Nights, commences with the History of Gritsamada. The grandfather of this sage was named Bhīma, and was sovereign of Vidarbha, the modern Berar. His capital city was named Kauṇḍinya after the sage of that name. The king had no children, which so afflicted him, that he left the city with his wife to wander in the forests and propitiate the deity. In his wanderings he met with Viśvāmītra, who directed him to worship Gañeśa. The deity proved propitious, and he had a son named Rukmāṅga, who, after arriving at manhood, and having been associated with his father in the government, one day lost his way while hunting in the woods, and came to a Rishi's hermitage. The sage's wife fell in love with the king, and when he refused to listen to her unlawful request, she cursed him, and brought on him the affliction of leprosy, from which he was freed only by applying to Gañeśa. Meanwhile Indra, whose character the Puranic writer seems little studious to exalt, is made to assume the form of the virtuous prince, and gratify the licentious passion of the Rishi's wife. The fruit of this connection was the sage Gritsamada, who, in the Index to the Rig-Veda, is mentioned as being the Rishi of certain portions of these sacred hymns. The circumstances of his origin were unknown to the sage himself, but not to the other Rishis, who, when he had joined himself to their society on the occasion of a Śrāddha performed by the sovereign of Magadha, reproached him with his spurious descent, and calling him the son of Rukmāṅga ordered him to quit the assembly. Stung to the quick by their reproaches, Gritsamada went to his mother, and on her acknowledging her guilt, he cursed her, imprecating on her the doom of becoming a Jujube tree¹ after her death, an event which followed soon after. She in return imprecated on him the doom of becoming a Brahma Rākshas. No change of form however befel the sage, nor did he require to die and be born

¹ कण्टकी or बदरी

again; on the contrary, the curse, as far as external circumstances made any change apparent, seemed to come upon him in the shape of a blessing. He courted no more the society of the *Rishis*, but after a short 'abode with certain *Munis* of a different profession, he betook himself to meditation on the Supreme Being, standing on his great toe with his mind intensely fixed on the deity. The divinity, identified as usual in this Purāṇa with Gaṇeśa, but possessing all the attributes of the Vedantist Brahma, appeared to him, and granted all his requests, Brahma Rakshas as he was, and still styling him Brahman and Sage¹, accorded to him, as he desired, pre-eminence in all his transmigrations above other Brahmans, divine knowledge², along with a beautiful shrubbery³, in which he might engage himself in divine meditation. After this the whole band of sages⁴ paid him the greatest respect, honoured him as their chief, and even went so far as to worship him with oblations⁵. Gritsamada still continued to meditate on the divine essence, absorbed in intense devotion. One day as he opened his eyes, he saw, at a great distance before him, something like an infant cast out in its blood, uttering mournful lamentations. His merciful disposition was sensibly affected, but after closing his eyes for a little while, he found on opening them again a beautiful boy coming up to him, who saluted him as his father and mother, saying that he had been given to him by the deity, and promising him all obedience, if he would adopt him and take him under his protection. Gritsamada complied with the child's request, taught him the mystic incantation Om, and sent him away to stand on his great toe contemplating the supreme Gaṇeśa. After some thousands of years the deity, propitiated by his austerities and the victory he had obtained over the senses and passions, appeared to him and desired him to ask a boon. The child asked the power of conquering the three worlds, which the divinity accorded, promising at the same time that he should be incapable of falling by any weapon except that of Siva, that he should possess three famous cities, one of iron, one of silver, and one of gold, and that on leaving the world he should be absorbed in the divine essence.

This child was no other than the famous Tripurāsura, who speedily set to work, and by the assistance of certain others whom he created, vanquished Indra and all the gods, sent them away to hide themselves in the caverns of the Himālaya Mountains, and reduced them to the greatest state of leanness and distress, by putting a stop

¹ विप्र and साधु² ब्रह्मज्ञानं³ पुष्पकं वनं⁴ मुनिगणाः⁵ यज्ञकर्मणि Adhyāya XXXVII. Sl. 35—39.

to the offering up of the oblations which mortals had been accustomed to present to them. After taking possession of Brahmá-loka and Vaikuṁṭha, sending Brahmá to his lotus bed, and Vishnu to the sea of milk, he went to Kailás and asked Siva to give it up to him and retire to Mandara, with which request, after a little grumbling, the good-natured deity complied. The gods in this sad predicament apply to Nárada, who, although ready enough to crouch, on suitable occasions, a little merriment at their expense, was ever ready to help them when they were really in distress. He recommends to them the worship of the Supremo Being ; telling them, that it was by adoration of the supreme Gaṇeśa that the Daitya had attained the pre-eminence he enjoyed, and that their affairs could be retrieved only by the adoption of the same mode of worship. The gods and Rishis take his advice, and at last obtain the favour of the deity, who promises to take their case into consideration and provide an effectual remedy. For this purpose Gaṇeśa disguises himself in the form of a Brahman, and accosting Tripurásura, told him that he could build him such a city as could be equalled neither in heaven nor on earth. On receiving the Asur's command to proceed with the work, he built for him the three famous cities, one of iron, one of silver, and one of gold. On being asked what boon he required for such a signal service, the cunning Brahman, in order that he might bring on a collision between the Asur and Siva requested the marble image of Gaṇeśa called Chintámani, which was placed at the entrance of Kailása. Tripurásura readily agreed to grant him such a trifling compensation for his important services. Yet, although in possession of Kailása, he considered it wrong to remove any of the furniture of the place without first going through the ceremony of asking Siva's leave, and accordingly sent two messengers to ask the god to give up the image. The Asur's messengers, in making this request in the name of their master, gave no obscure intimations that if the image were not given up on their requisition, force would be used to extort compliance. This was too much for Mahádeva, who getting into a rage, refused to accede to so unreasonable and uncivil a demand. On this Tripurásura mustered all his forces and attacked Siva, who advanced to meet him at the head of all the gods. The celestial armies were again routed, and their leader, the great Mahádeva himself, was obliged to make off, and skulk about the precipices, and lurk in the caverns of the Himalaya mountains, while the Asur bore off the famous image Chintámani, the subject of the dispute, in triumph to Pátála. Mortified and downcast at this defeat, Siva made no attempt to retrieve the affairs of the gods, till the faithful Nárada came to him

and instructed him in the worship of the supreme Spirit. After Siva had waited in the austere devotion for ten years on the supreme Gahesā, the god appeared to him, and after telling him that neither the divine Rishis, Brahmā, the Vedas, the Upanishads, nor the six Śāstras, were acquainted with his person¹, informed him that he was propitiated by his austerities, and would grant him the boon he desired, namely, victory over Tripurāsura. To make his triumph more certain and complete, Siva extols Gahesā in a hymn, in which every one of his thousand names is recited. The Asur can no longer withstand the might of the gods, who, through the blessing of the supreme Gahesā, and the generalship of Siva, obtain a complete victory. Mahādeva with his fiery darts consumes the three cities, and the Asur, no longer able to maintain his ground on earth, darts away as a brilliant meteor, and mingles with the divine essence.

If we are to suppose that this legend is nothing more than a flight of Brahmanical fancy, and that no allegory lurks under the external guise of a long subjection and protracted war of all the gods with a particular Asur, we shall do little credit to the wisdom of the sage by whom it was conceived; but if we suppose it to be an allegorical representation of the conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism, we have a subject worthy of the poet's genius, and obtain an extremely interesting, as well as probable account of that memorable struggle.

We need not question the strictly historical accuracy of all the events cognizable by man which befel Gritsamada. The spuriousness of his origin, his vast learning, his quarrel with the Brahmanical Rishis, his association with Munis of a different order, his devotion to the worship of the Supreme Divinity, and adoption of a ritual differing from that esteemed orthodox, are all circumstances that need not be called in question. His adopting Tripurāsura and teaching him the science of Divinity are also probable events. But the important questions are, what profession did Gritsamada adopt after he was expelled from the society of the Brahmans? Did he become a Buddhist, and is it the history of Buddhism our author is here giving under the veil of the legend of Tripurāsura?

To enable us to answer satisfactorily these questions; the following considerations, evidently deducible from the narrative, require to be kept in mind.

¹ न मे स्वरूपं जानन्ति देवर्षिश्चतुरासनः ।

न वेदाः सोपनिषदः कुतः षट्शास्त्रवेदिनः ॥

Adhyāya IV. Sl. 33.

1. During the new state of things introduced by Gritsamada and Tripurásura, according to the Purána, an entire stop was put to the performance of the Brahmanical ceremonies. This is expressly stated Adhyáya XL. Sloka 9—12. "Having brought in subjection all the gods, the Asur returned to earth, and the powerful Bhimakáya, subduer of the world, by his might brought in subjection all the kings, put the Rishis under restraint, shut up the fire temples¹, broke down everywhere the hermitages and holy places of the devotees, seized the houses erected as refuges to the religious;—and bloated with pride, set himself always in opposition to sacrifices to the gods², oblations to the *manes*³, burnt-offerings⁴, the study of the Vedas, and religious ceremonies."

No language can more fully describe an entire proscription of all the peculiar rites of the Brahmanical religion than this. It forms a comment on the aphorism quoted in a former paper⁵, in which the Agnihotra, the offering of flesh to the *manes*, &c., are declared prohibited in the Kaliyuga.

If we turn from the Brahmanical to the Buddhist records, we find in the account of Aśoka in the Mahavanso, that at the beginning of his reign, while following the religion of the Brahmans, he was in the habit daily of sacrificing a multitude of cows, but that he put an entire stop to this, and to the feeding of Brahmans, on his conversion to Buddhism. The first edict of this prince, as found engraved to this day, on stone pillars in various parts of India, interdicts the offering up of any animal in sacrifice, as well as killing them for the sake of food, thus abolishing one essential rite of the ancient Brahmanical ritual, as I have shown in a former paper⁶. Buddhism then produced the same effects as the government of Tripurásura in regard to the rites of the Brahmanical worship.

2. Indra, in the old Brahmanical system, was the creator of the world, and chief among the gods, sustaining in fact the attributes, and performing the works of the Brahmá, Vishnu, and Siva of modern Hinduism; while in the system of Tripurásura, Indra holds a place inferior to the Asur himself, and has no divine honours paid to him. The second Mafáala of the Rig Veda, being the latter part of the second Ashtaka, consists entirely of hymns, the composition of Gritsamada, who makes such a figure in the legend under review;—all doubtless composed before he had changed his principles and

¹ बुरहानि² खाहा³ खाहा⁴ चपद्⁵ Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, No. XIII., p. 2.⁶ Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, No. XIII., pp. 3, 4.

abandoned the Brahmanical religion. It cannot be unfair then to take the character of Indra in the ancient system from those authoritative hymns of his, which have been deemed worthy of a place in the Veda itself. It is as follows:—

1. O mortals, it is Indra, who is the first born, the intellectual, the divine, who protected the gods by his meritorious works, whose forces made the two worlds tremble, and who is great in might. 2. It is he who rendered firm the trembling earth, and established on their foundations the shaking mountains, who spread out the firmament, and caused the orb of day to ascend aloft. 3. Who, when he had slain the cloudy demon, made the seven rivers flow, who brought forth the cows which the Asur Bali had concealed, and produced fire from the midst of the watery cloud, destroying his foe in the conflict. 4. By whom all creatures that move on the earth were made, who formed the servile tribe that dwell in caverns under ground, and conquering the myriads of his foes brought down their power with the ease a hunter does (a stag¹).

Such is the character of Indra given by Gritsamada while a votary of Brahmanism. Indra is the creator of the earth and sky, and of all their inhabitants, the preserver of the pious, and the destroyer of the impious; but the pupil of the same Gritsamada, who had learned his system from him after his change of creed, is described in our Purāna as ascending to heaven, meeting Indra in hostile conflict, knocking his thunderbolt out of his hand, and after a struggle getting hold of him by the feet, whirling him round and round, and throwing him into a region no one knew where, and in the end seating himself on Airāvata and taking possession of the throne of heaven². We have only to turn over a few pages of the Mahāvanso to find that Sakko (Indra), though dignified with the name of god, is a being of no esteem among the Buddhists, and receives no divine honours, these being all reserved for Buddha and his Theros.

3. Contemplation of the Supremo Being is represented as a mode of divine worship practised by Gritsamada and Tripurāsura, while

¹ Ashitaka II. Adhyāya 6. Varga 7.

यो जात एव प्रथमो मनस्वान् देवो देवान्क्रतुना पर्यभूयत् ।

यस्य शुष्माद्रोद सी अभ्यसेतां नृमणस्य मन्हा स जना स इन्द्रः ॥

यः पृथिवीं व्यथमानामहंहृद्यः पथितान्प्रकुपितान् अररणात् ।

यो अंतरिक्षं विममे वरीयो यो द्यामस्तभूत स जना स इन्द्रः ॥ &c.

² Adhyāya 39.

unknown both to the Brahmans and the Saivas, though afterwards adopted by both parties for the purpose of subduing the Asur.

It is plain from a review of the Vedas that sacrifices, and singing hymns to Indra, Agni, Soma, and other gods, now considered by the Hindus of an inferior grade, was the highest form of divine worship known to the ancient Brahmans. In the Bhágavat Gíta the Sáma is considered the holiest of the Vedas. It is preserved by the Brahmans with a care, and its hymns sung with a reverence, that plainly mark the veneration in which it is held. I found far less difficulty in the west of India in obtaining copies of the other Vedas, than I did in procuring those of the Sáma, and yet it consists entirely of hymns to the above-mentioned divinities. Siva and Brahmá are never even mentioned, and Vishnu is rarely invoked, and then only as subordinate to Indra.

On the other hand, Gritsamada, according to our Purána, practised fixed contemplation of the Supremo Being as a mode of divine worship, only after he had been expelled from the society of the Brahmans, and had become a Brahma Rákshas, and made the acquaintance of the Muni, who dwelt in the Pushpaka Vana (Flowery Forest). At that time neither Siva nor any of the Brahmanical gods or sages were acquainted with this mode of obtaining the favour of the divinity. This is evident from the narrative of Gritsamada's conversion, or apostacy, which is as follows: "Then a voice from heaven was heard, and Gritsamada became a demon¹. The same Gritsamada then went to commence the practice of devotion². As he wandered on he at last came to the forest, named the Flowery³, filled with various trees and vines, and ornamented with clusters of flowers, adorned also with cascades of water, and the society of eminent sages. Gritsamada dwelt awhile with several venerable men, submitting to their commands. Then having bathed he performed *japa*, standing on the great toe with a fixed mind, contemplating the Supremo Lord, the god Vighnesvara, fixing his eyes on the point of his nose, yet seeing in all the ten directions, conquering his senses, restraining his breath, conquering the mind, and living on air. Thus for a thousand divine ages he performed severe *japa*⁴."

Such was the religion of Gritsamada, by which he obtained the favour of the Supremo Being and divine knowledge⁵. It was the same system that he taught Tripurásura, and by which that enemy of the gods obtained the supremacy over heaven and earth, and thrust

¹ अहि

² अनुष्ठानाय

³ पुष्पकवनं

⁴ Adhyáya 37. Sl. 1—5.

⁵ ब्रह्मज्ञानं

down from heaven all the Brahmanical deities. Such also, according to the Mahāvanso, was the system of Buddha, a system of spiritual and mystical contemplation of the all-pervading spirit.

Until Nārada visited the gods in their distress for the purpose of consoling and instructing them, they remained in entire ignorance of this spiritual and mystical system. On that occasion he addressed them as follows:—"I will relate to you concisely the greatly meritorious actions of the Daitya. He performed *tapa* for a thousand years, and obtained the favour of Gaṇeśa, the chief of the gods, and those irresistible blessings which carry dread to all others, and preserve him from all harm at the hands of Devas, Rishis, Pitris, Bhūtas, Yūksas, Rākshas, Pīśāchas and Nāgas,—of all except the lord Sankara (Siva). Therefore, let all seek the favour of the chief of the gods, Gaṇeśa, with all respect, and let all worship him who obviates every difficulty, and bestows every needful blessing." The gods said: "O wise instructor, teach us how to worship that god of gods. Super-eminent sage, mercifully tell us how to proceed." Nārada replies: "I will teach you all the one syllable *mantra* (Om). Repeating that *mantra* with a pious and fixed mind let all engage in meditating on the Supremo Being¹. As far as I can see Gaṇeśa is the god to whom you must apply. He will deliver you all. There is no other remedy than this²."

In the same manner Nārada instructs Siva, who was formerly ignorant, in this worship of the supreme Gaṇeśa, as we have shown in the narrative. It was only then, according to this Purāna, by the adoption of this new form of worship practised first by the Asurs, that Siva and the gods conquered their enemies and regained the supremacy which they had lost. While the Vedas, as we have seen, speak only of the worship of a multitude of gods, propitiated by sacrifices and libations, the Mahāvanso introduces Buddha as remaining for many years in fixed contemplation of the divinity, and thus obtaining his favour, and afterwards proceeding to collect and instruct disciples exactly according to the plan adopted by the Asur, as described in this Purāna.

4. The final state of bliss in which Tripurāsura is said to have entered after death was unknown to the ancient system of the Brāhmanas, but the idea has since been borrowed by them, and final emancipation made the chief reward of devotion.

The Sāma Veda concludes with the following prayer, which contains supplications only for temporal blessings,—the kind of good

¹ अनुष्ठानं प्रकुर्वन्तु

² Adhyāya 40. Śl. 24—31.

things which is chiefly dwelt upon in the Vedas. "Grant, O ye gods, who receive sacrifices, that we may hear only what is auspicious with our ears, and see only what is auspicious with our eyes; and may we who propitiate the gods arrive at the age fixed by the divinity, with undiminished mental and bodily vigour." The reward of the pious is on one occasion described as "reaching the world of the Sun!"; on another, as "conquering the earth and ascending to the lofty mansions of the sky!," evidently Indra's heaven, the place appointed according to the Bhagavat Gita for those who follow the rites prescribed by the Vedas. Tripurásura, on the contrary, according to this Purána, receives absorption into the divine essence as the reward of his devotion, just as Buddha received Nirván as the reward of his. This part of the Asur system, it is well known, has like the preceding been embodied by the Brahmans in the new Eclectic system of Hinduism which they have formed, and endeavoured to palm upon the world as the religion of their ancient *Rishis*. There is no doubt some slight shade of difference between the Mukti of the Brahmans, and the Nirván of the Buddhists, but they agree in the great and prevailing idea, that the liberated soul becomes united to the supreme spirit, and loses all traces of individuality.

5. Gritsamada is represented as practising celibacy, having neither wife nor progeny, and adopting as his son, to fill up the ranks of his order, Tripurásura, a wandering orphan, who presented himself before him. The accordance of such a state of things with the institutes of Buddhism, and its opposition to Brahmanism, is too obvious to require a single remark.

If now we consider that Gritsamada agreed in all these important points—in his notions of the object of adoration—the ceremonies of religion—the nature of divine worship—the reward of devotion, and the mode of filling up the ranks of the priesthood—with the Buddhists, while differing in them all from the ancient Brahmans, we shall have little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the author of the Purána is here drawing a picture of the Buddhist sect, which, although sometimes degenerating into a caricature, represents nevertheless the general features of Buddhism, with sufficient distinctness to make them easily recognised.

One remark more yet remains to be made, and it is one of no small importance in the history of religious opinions in India; it is that Gritsamada when he left the Brahmanical sages found other Munis with whom he resided, and whose commands he for a season

¹ P. II. Adhyáya VII. 4.

² P. I. Prapathaka I. Daśati 10. 2.

obeyed, though it is not said that he adopted their entire system. So Buddha in the Mahavanso is said to have met with *doctors of reason*, whose ideas of religion were similar to his own, though not in all points identical. Buddha gave a great impulse to the system of the ancient Munis, and now modelled it, so as to make it pass for one of his own invention among foreigners ; and this is exactly the light in which Gritsamada and Tripurásura are exhibited in relation to the Munis of Pushpaka Vana.

The legend of Devántaka and Narántaka, with which the second part of the Purána commences, is so similar to that of Gritsamada and Tripurásura in their performance of *Anushthán*, their victory over Indra, and devotion to the supreme Ganeśa, that it does not seem to require any separate remark ; though it furnishes additional proof of the oneness of Buddhism and the Asur system, and leads to the same conclusion as that at which we have arrived from the consideration of the former part of the work.